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RUEHBP/AMEMBASSY BAMAKO 0008
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RUEHNR/AMEMBASSY NAIROBI 0010
RUEHDK/AMEMBASSY DAKAR 0010
RUEHDS/AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA 0008
RUEHUJA/AMEMBASSY ABUJA 0011
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 FEST TWO 000012

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SUBJECT: NDJAMENA 006: EU PRESSURES CHAD ON HUMAN RIGHTS AND
POLITICAL ISSUES

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CLASSIFIED BY: LucyTamlyn, Deputy Chief of Mission , U.S.
Embassy N'Djamena , State Department .

REASON: 1.4 (b), (d)

11. (SBU) Summary. As a result of EU and French pressure (linked with the expected upcoming visit of French President Sarkozy, possibly accompanied by an EC official), the Government of Chad has publically agreed to set up a Commission of Inquiry to investigate the disappearances of political leaders Yorongar and Ibni Oumar. The Government has also declared itself ready to relaunch the implementation of the political agreement signed on August 13, 2007 with the political opposition. End Summary.

12. (U) The Ambassador met with EU Ambassador Gilles Desesquelles February 22 to discuss the fate of political opposition leaders, the prospects for resumption of the implementation of the August 13, 2007 agreement with the political opposition, and the EU Mission's security posture.

EU RESPONSE TO MISSING POLITICAL LEADERS AND STATE OF EMERGENCY

3.(C) Ambassador Desesquelles reported that he had met with President Deby February 19 to raise concerns about the State of Emergency and to ask about the fate of the detained or missing political leaders. (Note: EU Commissioner Luis Michel issued a press release February 11 expressing concern about the arrest of opposition representatives in Chad. End note.) Desesquelles urged the President to limit the State of Emergency to no more than a month and expressed particular concern about curtailment of freedom of expression. Granted a meeting with detained political leader Lol Mahamat Choa the next evening (to which he was accompanied by Minister of Interior Bechir and Presidential Counselor for International Relations Youssef Saleh Abbas), he reported finding the former President in good health and in a much improved setting (when the French Ambassador had seen him he was in a location without access to water or sanitation and was haggard and unshaven). Desesquelles had asked of Choa: "you are accused of having a meeting with rebel leader Mahamat Nouri, do you acknowledge this information?" Choa replied that

this was not true, that he was a man of peace who only advocated peaceful means of political change and respect for the constitution. Desesquelles asked further, "is this arrest arbitrary" to which Choa responded "yes." Desesquelles related that this exchange clearly irritated Minister Bechir.

5.(C) Concerning the two missing political leaders, Ibni Oumar and Yorongar, Desesquelles reported that the French Ambassador believed that Yorongar was in hiding in southern Chad. As far as Ibni Oumar, Desesquelles' personal opinion was that he had been taken and probably roughed up; the government might be waiting for him to be "presentable" before releasing. He reiterated that this was only his hunch -- he had no confirmation that this was in fact true.

16. (C) Desesquelles noted that the EU had been first off of the block to condemn the rebel attack (February 1) and to accuse Sudan of supporting the movement. Desesquelles confided that the French had been a bit "fuzzier" on the events. They appeared to have been sitting on the fence on Feb 1-2 to see who might be the victor (after having asked President Deby on February 1 if he wished assistance in leaving the country.). Desesquelles noted that the French Defense Minister's statement of February 2 that N'Djamena was in the hands of the rebels was quite different from the interview with French radio which Desesquelles had given that day in which he stated that, although the situation on the ground was quite confused, the Presidential Palace and the airfield were still in the hands of the government.

FRANCE AND EU SET PRECONDITIONS TO HIGH LEVEL VISITS

17. (C) Ambassador Desesquelles informed the Ambassador that a "high ranking EC representative might accompany French President Sarkozy in his upcoming visit to Chad (not confirmed, but possibly on Wednesday February 27.) He stated that both the EC and the French had insisted that as a precondition to this visit that the Government of Chad relaunch the political reform process and set up a Commission of Inquiry to look into the disappearances of political opposition leaders. The Government

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had accordingly released a statement on February 20 stating that the GOC undertook to put in place a Commission of Inquiry which would be open to the international community. The statement also stated the government's willingness to pursue the implementation of the political agreement of August 13, 2007. Desesquelles stressed that the Commission of Inquiry would ideally have representatives of the international community, such as the International Red Cross, or the office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights. Ambassador Nigro queried whether there were concrete steps that had been agreed that would show that movement was happening on these goals. Desesquelles said that there were not, and acknowledged that one of his challenges would be to bring the remaining CPDC members back to the negotiating table.

EUFOR PROGRESS AND MINURCAT BLOCKAGE

18. (SBU) Ambassador Desesquelles reported that the lack of agreement on compensation for Chadian gendarmes and police working with MINURCAT (the GOC is insisting that these be paid at expatriate rates) was a serious problem. Full EUFOR deployment required MINURCAT deployment. He noted that UN Under Secretary Guehenno and EC Commissioner Luis Michel had both

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raised this with the President, with no success. In the meantime, EUFOR advance deployment itself was moving along rapidly. During a recent visit to Abeche he witnessed the arrival of Portuguese and Polish troops. Some 550 forces were now deployed, and great progress was being made. He candidly remarked that this was the first time that European forces were operating on an intervention mission under the Common Defense Policy and it was imperative that the mission succeed. Ambassador Desesquelles also mentioned that he had raised with

French Foreign Affairs Adviser Chevalier (currently visiting Chad) the idea of having another conference for countries in the region to discuss regional stability issues.

EU MISSION SECURITY POSTURE

¶9. (SBU) Ambassador Desesquelles commented that President Deby may believe that he is stronger as a result of the recent victory, but in fact his situation is more fragile. Desesquelles was aware of concerns of another rebel attack. Following the lead of the French Embassy, family members of the EU Mission have departed country. In theory they will be allowed back in on March 10 (date of re-opening of the French school). They may return before that, but will not be provided assistance in the event of an evacuation. Desesquelles noted that the March 10 date was of course subject to the security situation prevailing at the time.

COMMENT

¶10. (SBU) The high ranking EC official is most likely Louis Michel, EC Commissioner for Development and Humanitarian Affairs.
NIGRO